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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – June 2005****“Living with Bats”**

The San Bernardino County Animal Care & Control Program would like to share this important information about bats with residents:

There are 26 species of bats in California and most of them are found in San Bernardino County. Bats are wild animals that are nocturnal, which means they come out at night. They are very shy creatures that prefer to avoid human contact, but they have been known to set up roosts in attics, garages, barns, and deserted buildings. All bat species in the County are insectivorous (insect-eaters) hence; they play a beneficial role in controlling the County’s insect population, including mosquitoes that can carry West Nile Virus and other diseases. Bats are a protected species and cannot be exterminated.

The best way to keep bats out of your house is to make sure you have screens that are in excellent condition on the doors and windows of your home. If a single bat does make its way into your house you can persuade it to leave after dark by turning on lights so that you can see the bat, and then confining it to a single room. Once it is confined to a single room, you should provide it with an escape route by opening the windows and doors in that room. If this doesn't work, wait for it to land and cover it with a clear Tupperware container so that you can still see the bat. Get a piece of cardboard, a manila file folder, or a calendar and slide it under the container. Next, carefully release the bat outdoors if it has not come into contact with humans or pets. If you do find a bat colony on your property, there are special companies that will humanely “exclude” them from your house, garage, or barn. For more information on bat exclusion, call SBCO Preventive Veterinary Services at (909) 387-4862.

Bats, just like any other mammal, may carry rabies, which is a fatal disease that can be passed on to pets and people. Rabid bats usually do not become aggressive unless they are provoked or in self-defense. It is important that people never handle a bat, especially one that is unable to fly. If a bat bites you, you need to go to the hospital

IMMEDIATELY – do not wait! Residents should call their local animal control agency

to report a bite (human or pet) as well as to request pick up of bats found on the ground, patio, or porch (in the unincorporated areas of San Bernardino call County Animal Care & Control at their toll free number 1-800-472-5609). The most important thing to remember is **DO NOT TOUCH BATS!** Thank you.

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